



COMMITTEE ON  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
DEMOCRATS  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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## **Tonko Remarks at 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation Fuels Act Legislative Hearing**

**Washington, D.C.** – *Energy and Commerce Environment Subcommittee Ranking Member Paul Tonko (D-NY) delivered the following opening remarks today at a legislative hearing entitled “Discussion Draft: The 21st Century Transportation Fuels Act.”*

Thank you, Chairman Shimkus. And thank you to our witnesses, not just for joining us this morning, but also for all your input in this process over the course of the 115th Congress.

Before we go any further, I want to recognize Chairman Shimkus and Mr. Flores for all the work that went into producing this discussion draft.

For the past two years, the Subcommittee has hosted three stakeholder roundtables and five hearings on transportation fuels policy.

As we heard at previous hearings, this is a complicated problem with no easy solution, so I appreciate the effort that went into developing this proposal.

These Members were given an incredibly difficult assignment, trying to find common ground on an issue where many stakeholders say it does not exist.

And while I have some serious concerns with the draft as it is currently written, I do think the Chairman and Mr. Flores have done an admirable job and conducted a process in good faith to try to create that common ground.

For the past two years, we have heard about issues with the implementation of the Renewable Fuel Standard program, which have existed under Administrations from both parties.

In my mind, the program can certainly be improved. We will hear about the use of small refinery waivers and the challenges with pathway approvals this morning.

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And despite some flaws, I believe it is critical— whether through RFS or another program—that the benefits of our nation’s clean energy transition are shared throughout the country, including rural communities.

Unfortunately, this Administration’s actions indicate that they do not share this belief.

We have seen it through unnecessary trade disputes that hit farmers hardest.

We have seen it when the President continues to deny the threat of climate change, despite the National Climate Assessment’s finding that changes in precipitation, coupled with rising extreme temperatures, could reduce Midwest agricultural productivity to levels of the 1980s before mid-century.

These types of actions are harming, and will continue to harm, rural economies and undermine the goals of the RFS.

We should be working on legislation that meets our collective need for a cleaner energy future while directly benefiting, and creating opportunities in, rural communities.

From the start of this process, I have told stakeholders that I support the RFS, or its potential replacement, to the extent that it results in fewer greenhouse gas emissions. I am not certain that would be the outcome under the proposal before us, so while I look forward to hearing everyone’s feedback, I do have concerns in its current form.

I specifically want to mention the proposal’s changes to the CAFE program in Title III of the draft.

Perhaps all of today’s witnesses will acknowledge the potential for high octane fuels as a method to achieve fuel economy standards.

If CAFE compliance will become easier through a high octane performance standard— on top of the Administration’s freeze of previously announced standards— I do not think we should also provide additional credits to achieve compliance, as would occur under Title III.

If we really want to drive efficiency and innovation while creating certainty, this discussion draft should drop the so-called “harmonization” language and include legislation written by our colleague Ms. Matsui to preserve the previously announced CAFE standards.

Finally, I want to say perhaps the only thing that will unite today’s witnesses— granted, it is unity through opposition. It is my belief that the federal government should be advancing policies that reduce demand and reliance on liquid fuels.

I am not naïve enough to think this will happen overnight. But we know that the transportation sector is now the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, and that our climate policy must address it.

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Earlier this year we held a hearing that focused on electrification, but sadly, none of the ideas discussed are reflected in the 21st Century Transportation Fuels Act.

If we are going to do a major overhaul of federal fuel and vehicle programs, we must look at how to further promote EVs as well.

For the time being, while liquid fuels continue to be the predominant energy source in transportation, these fuels should be as clean, and used as efficiently, as possible.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman for your hard work on developing this proposal. I yield back.

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